



Over 300 Latinos Attended Citizen Summit III

The Citizen Summit was launched four years ago, when Mayor Anthony A. Williams was elected. This year, nearly 3,000 residents of the District gathered on November 15 at the new Washington Convention Center for Citizen Summit III; an opportunity for residents to help plan the future of the city.

"Of course, I hear from our residents every day in different settings as I crisscross the city discussing issues," said Mayor Williams. "But the Citizen Summit is different—he added—it's the one day we can come together as a city to discuss our present and our future."

Citizen Summit III was convened by Mayor Williams and attended by several members of City Council, as well as numerous ANC Commissioners. The results of the discussions at the more than 400 tables during this Summit will be used by Mayor Williams to develop the Citywide Strategic Plan, which sets out the programs and services that will be put in place for the 2005 city budget.

"We also came to the Washington Convention Center to set an example—for the country and the world. The message is that it's possible for people of different races, genders, incomes, and religions to come together for civic dialogue."

This discussion was definitely engaged by a number of residents of the District of Columbia who represent very closely the demographics of the city. Even though the percentage of "counted" Latinos in the District of Columbia is only 8%, over 300 Latinos, or 11% of all participants, were present at this important summit. Among the major issues of concern for our participants were quality education, neighborhood safety, and the expansion of jobs and other economic opportunities for our residents.

For complete results from the Citizen Summit III, residents may visit the Neighborhood Action website, at www.neighborhoodaction.dc.gov. A Summit follow-up meeting is scheduled for January 31, 2004. This event will be open to the public and will address next steps following the Summit and its results.



DC Latino residents discuss key city issues at the summit.

(Picture by El Tiempo Latino)

The Office on Latino Affairs (OLA) will continue its work to ensure that the Latino community of the District of Columbia is well represented at this meeting and other important forums and events. Our participation and voice is critical in the context of planning for city programs and services.

Message from the Director

Welcome to OLA!!

It is a pleasure to welcome you to our new format of H-OLA Gram. My first few weeks as the new Director of OLA have been extremely positive. I am grateful to the fact that my immersion into OLA and the District has been characterized by welcoming and sincere interactions with people across our community.

Many of the challenges faced by Latinos in our city remain. OLA is charged to ensure that those challenges are addressed by the District's government through strong advocacy, persistent outreach and information, and quality community-based programs. We have plenty of work ahead of us, but the dedication and commitment by OLA is stronger than ever.

In the next few months this H-OLA Gram will undergo a noticeable improvement by providing you with information about Latinos in the city, partnerships with community organizations, events, government information and communication about OLA jobs, initiatives and programs. Concurrently, we expect our website to be transformed in order to give you the most accurate and updated information about District's Latinos and OLA.

I encourage you to use OLA as a resource for your needs and problems. Our doors are open to anyone in search for more and better opportunities.

Again, ¡¡*Bienvenidos y gracias!!*

Gustavo Velásquez

Mayor's Latino Cultural Fair & Town Hall Meeting



OLA hosted its first Latino Cultural Fair and Town Hall on Monday, September 29, 2003 at Cardozo High

School. The event provided Latinos with access to DC Health Alliance enrollment, TPS enrollment, information on the various programs by the Dept of Human Services, as well as a host of other government informa-



tion. Also provided was cultural food from local Latino restaurants and entertainment by the Bell High School Dominican Dance Group and EOFULA's Seniors.



The Latino Cultural Fair, attended by ap-



proximately 250 people (the majority of them Latinos) was followed by a Latino Town Hall hosted by OLA and Mayor Anthony A. Williams. During this town hall, Latinos were provided a forum to discuss

issues such as police relations and gang violence, education, and job training and opportunities. Accompanying Mayor Williams were Chief Charles Ramsey of MPD, Gustavo Velásquez, Director of OLA, and a number of other Cabinet members from DC government.



Buckle-up Day



On Friday November 14, 2003, OLA, in partnership with DC Safe Kids Coalition and the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. organized "Buckle Up DC Day". This successful event featured child safety sit installation checks and education for their proper use. Multiple free

child safety seats were given to low-income families as symbol of the commitment these organizations have for the safety of children. Entertainment for the children was also part of the celebration.

This event was a success and showed the engagement of the Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs on

the well being of the Latino families in the District. "We believe that many families are not aware of the implications of children being properly seated and buckled up; education on this matter is not only crucial, but an obligation for all of us", commented Kathy Ruffner, OLA Outreach Coordinator.

OLA's Cultural Diversity Training

OLA's Cultural Diversity training with the Office of Human Rights was delivered as part of its Hispanic Heritage Month activities. On October 9, 2003, OLA and OHR hosted front line employees and some supervisors from district agencies to increase cultural awareness and competencies in providing services to Latino and other limited English proficient residents.

Agencies that participated in this initial-training were Alcoholic Beverages Regulatory Commission, Dept. of Consumer and Regulatory

Affairs, Dept. Housing and Community Development, Dept. of Human Services, and Dept. of Public Works, among others.



OLA is working with other government agencies to institutionalize this training so that all District government employees are trained and provide better customer service to the city's Latino and other LEP population.

DCGHEA, an Old Organization Again on the Rise

The DC Government Hispanic Employees Association (DCGHEA) has been in existence for almost twenty years. It was organized by a small group of Hispanic employees back in 1985. Among those organizers were: Arturo Griffith, Alberto Gomez, Sonia Gutierrez, Arturo Rodriguez, and Roland Roebuck. The organization at first was open to only current or past employees of DC government. Currently however, membership is open to members of the private sector as well, as long as the individual supports the organization's goals which are to be a non-partisan, non-profit group operating independently, and solely for social, charitable, cultural, civic and educational purposes.

At the time of the DCGHEA's foundation, Hispanics in the Washington area were just starting to be a significant element of the fabric of the District of Columbia. Organizers had in mind a body that works towards developing programs and activities that would promote the welfare of all the Hispanic employees working in the various agencies of the District government.

Contingent with supporting His-

panic employees, the organization also seeks to foster the expansion of services provided by DC government agencies to Hispanic residents. By engaging in a broad range of activities, members contribute to participation by Hispanic individuals and groups in the main stream of economic and social institutions. Members also make a concerted effort to influence decision-makers in their agencies to be more responsive to the needs of Hispanics in their policy making and service delivery.

"Almost twenty years later our goals are the same, and we find that our mission is still very much relevant," said Patricia Walker, current president. "It is even more important now to be organized," she adds, "especially since the number of Hispanics employees keeps dwindling in comparison with the total number of employees in the workforce."

DCGHEA benefits its members by assisting each with career development and advancement opportunities. Members get access to information and assistance in navigating through DC government and its processes. By networking they bring about positive

changes in the workplace and the community. These changes can be in government policy, better delivery of agency services, sensitivity to ethnic differences, or legislation that takes

"The number of Hispanic employees keeps dwindling in comparison with the total number of employees in the workforce", said Pat Walker.

into consideration the various needs of Hispanic residents as well as the skills that they offer.

All employees are encouraged to join so that the organization's activities can be expanded even more. Presently DCGHEA is being "revitalized." In the last year it has become an incorporated organization with the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. Right now it is awaiting a determination from the Internal Revenue Service to become a 501(c)(3) exempt organization. A drive to enroll members, hold general elections, and install a new Executive Board are the principal activities that the organization is undertaking.

Latino Community Education Grant: LCEG 2003 Wrap-up

OLA's Latino Community Education Grant for 2003 ended last October 15. Of the fifteen community and service based organizations, the LCEG served a significant number of Latino residents of the District of Columbia.

During the fiscal year OLA provided a Latino Community Based Organization Funding Development Roundtable, where technical support and funding development resources, networking and best practices sharing were available to all Latino serving organizations.

Information and workshops were given by groups such as the DC Bar Pro Bono Association, The Mayor's Office on Partnerships and Grants Management's Grants Information Resource Center, Technology Works, and Americorp to name a few.

OLA also managed a Addiction Prevention Recovery Administration, Latino Health Collaborative, and a ProUrban Youth summer program aimed at improving services and access to District Latinos.





Executive Office of the Mayor,

Office on Latino Affairs

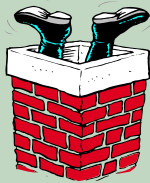
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OLA, Working for you and yours!

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We are on the Web!

www.ola.dc.gov

OLA Welcomes New Staff

- *Tony Lugo is OLA's newest staff assistant, joining its Community Outreach Team. Mr. Lugo comes from the private sector to OLA and is a native of New York, from Puerto Rican parents. Mr. Lugo has lived in the Washington, DC Metro area for over three years. He comes with great enthusiasm to advance OLA's agenda of providing quality customer care and resources to all Latinos in the District of Columbia.*



Jobs @ OLA

- *OLA is still looking for qualified candidates for key programs, including Community Outreach Specialists, Advocacy Program Specialists, and a Deputy Director. All interested persons should visit www.dcop.gov website to access information on how to apply for these important positions.*

OLA

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